



INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

Chair's Corner



Super Bowl 51 is just around the corner! In fact, we've already begun to have Super Bowl-related events and crowds in the Houston area. Downtown road closures are outlined in the document that was emailed to you by our Executive

Director.

I want to thank all of you who attended our **FEB meeting in January!** We had a briefing from FPS District Commander Todd Consolini regarding efforts underway to benefit federal agencies during the disruptive events surrounding the Super Bowl. We also had FEMA Region VI National Preparedness Division Director provide information on DHS efforts in preparation for the Super Bowl.

In anticipation of issues that might affect the Federal Community, the Houston FEB has setup an **emergency text notification system** through which we will send timely information in brief, limited text format to Houston Federal Agency Leaders who have responded to LeAnn Jenkins' request for information. This is a voluntary "opt-in" process; if you have not yet responded, but wish to receive the information, please send a text with your name & agency in the body

to leann.jenkins@gsa.gov.

Our **Houston FEB Awards** nomination process is now underway! Information and the nomination categories, along with the nomination coversheet are provided in this newsletter for your convenience.

Nominations are due March 1 so get started today! The date of our Awards program is confirmed as May 15, 2017 in the Leland Federal Building and we hope that you not only nominate employees, we hope you attend the event! I will be there!

In response to your responses to the training survey we conducted two months ago, we have scheduled a full-day training class, entitled "**Dealing with Difficult People**". There is a fee for this course; the course description and registration form are provided in this newsletter for your review and distribution.

Watch for **pre-retirement seminars** that will be planned in the next few months!

I look forward to seeing you at one of our many upcoming events!

Tim Jeffcoat, Chairman

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What Can Be Invested in the TSP

Not all types of federal compensation can be invested in the TSP. Instead, investments must come from “basic pay,” which is defined as the amount of pay based on the rate fixed by law or administrative action for the position held by an employee and is the same as basic pay for federal civilian retirement purposes.

The following elements of pay are included in the determination of basic pay for TSP purposes:

- Locality-based comparability pay as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5304
- Environmental and night differentials for wage employees (5 U.S.C. 4343(c)(4) and 4343(f))
- Premium pay for standby time under 5 U.S.C. 5545(c)(1)
- Premium pay for law enforcement officers (5 U.S.C. 5545(c)(2), i.e., admin uncontrollable overtime)
- Availability pay (LEAP) for criminal investigators as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5545a
- Physicians’ comparability allowance as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5948
- Overtime compensation for customs officers as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 8331(3)(G)
- Additional compensation paid to employees serving in the Republic of Panama (22 U.S.C. 3657)

The following elements of pay and types of payments are not basic pay for TSP purposes:

- Other overtime pay
- Awards, bonuses, and allowances (includes danger pay)
- Foreign and domestic post differential for general schedule, and foreign post differential for wage employees
- Severance pay
- Retroactive pay granted to a retired or deceased employee pursuant to a wage survey
- Lump-sum payment for leave, and Voluntary separation incentive payment (buyout)
- Workers’ compensation payments from the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs
- Sunday, holiday and military pay
- Supervisory differentials
- Night differentials for GS employees

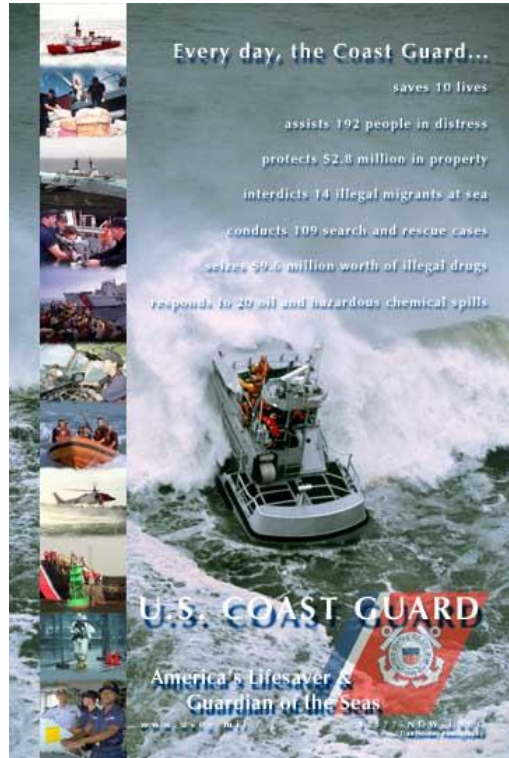
Reprinted from

<http://www.fedweek.com/retirement-policy/can-invested-tsp/>

Spotlighting Information in Public Service

Did you Know?

The Coast Guard is an armed military service, a federal law enforcement agency and a maritime rescue organization as well as a regulatory enforcement and environmental protection agency. Its mission in Southeast Texas and Southwest Louisiana is to facilitate commerce, in a manner compatible with public safety, national security and environmental stewardship. Coast Guard Sector Houston-Galveston is located at Ellington Joint Reserve Base a short distance South of the Houston metropolitan area. The Sector oversees 17 subordinate units, comprised of three Marine Safety Units, 4 armed patrol boats, five multi-mission response boat stations, two aids-to-navigation tenders and a logistical field office in Galveston. The Sector also collaborates with several other local Coast Guard units not under its authority, including Air Station Houston and Maritime Safety and Security Team Houston. The Coast Guard carries out a variety of important missions throughout Galveston Bay and coastal waters of Texas and Louisiana. These include maritime search and rescue, marine pollution prevention and response, maintenance of maritime navigational aids, fisheries enforcement, maritime homeland security and management of nationally-critical waterways. The Coast Guard is comparable to the Environmental Protection Agency in the coastal zone, responsible for monitoring compliance by vessels and waterfront facilities with Federal pollution prevention regulations. It also responds to pollution incidents to identify those responsible, hold them accountable and ensure quick clean



up to preserve water quality and minimize environmental degradation. As a regulatory enforcement agency, acting on behalf of the U.S. as a flag state administration, the Coast Guard licenses U.S. mariners, affirms their medical fitness and competence for maritime transportation-related service and initiates license suspension and revocation proceedings when medical fitness or mariner competence is in doubt. The Coast Guard also inspects U.S.-registered commercial vessels for compliance with U.S. laws and regulations as well as international conventions while also examining foreign vessels

for their compliance with international safety, security and environmental protection standards. Additionally, Coast Guard investigators investigate major marine casualties to identify causal factors, including operator negligence, to preclude recurrence. Coast Guard inspectors and enforcement personnel routinely scrutinize vessels intending to call in local ports to validate the legitimacy of their voyage and ensure the vessels, their crews and cargos harbor no threats to the homeland. In some cases vessels are held off-shore for law enforcement boarding while others are escorted by enforcement platforms to protect them from external threats. Waterfront facilities are also inspected regularly for compliance with Federal security regulations underlying supply chain security. Sector Houston-Galveston's area of responsibility extends from the eastern bank of the Colorado River in Southwest Texas to approximately 60 miles each of Lake Charles, Louisiana; from the Texas-Oklahoma border to the seaward extent to the U.S. exclusive economic zone.

Why Do Remote Workers Leave More Often?

Considering the advantages, why do remote workers leave more often than traditional in-office team members?

With studies showing a sharp increase in employees working from home, you'd think remote workers would be more likely to view their jobs as "perks" and therefore, would be more likely to stay at organizations longer...nope.

While teleworkers often show higher levels of satisfaction with the work, they are more prone to accept competing job offers, calls from headhunters, and small raises in pay that wouldn't sway your more traditional employees.

But the reason isn't that they're *unhappy*...the reason is that they're *not engaged*.

So, all things being equal, *why do remote workers leave more often than those who come into the office?*

People still quit managers more often than they quit jobs or companies. People always have—and always will—stay with managers they like and trust, and leave managers they don't trust. While remote workers generally don't *hate* their bosses, they report having weaker personal relationships with their manager (and vice versa by the way). *Think about it: if you don't feel a strong personal connection, loyalty or comradeship with your manager, it really doesn't matter which manager you work for, does it?*

Remote work tends to become transactional. Recent studies show that people who don't work in an office tend to get more tasks completed. But tasks are often done in isolation from the rest of the team. If people who work in isolation are simply getting their work done, and not helping, contributing or building on the work of their teammates, the feeling of collaboration is lost.

We stay put when we're having fun, engage, and like and trust the people we work with. Social

connections often keep us where we are. We have ties to the team we work with and company that employs us. There's history, personal relationships, (which may be even friendly!) and memories that go a long way, convincing us we're better off where we are than starting over somewhere else. If the relationships erode, or we feel like it doesn't matter who else is on the team because you never interact with them, there's less reason to stay.

The barriers to changing jobs are way lower. If I work from home, and I get a new job that lets me work from home, *what's really changed?* My commute (down the hall and turn left at the laundry room) remains the same. The type of work will be pretty much identical, and I will be on my own anyway. Why not leave the first time I get bored, or I can make a dollar or two more an hour?

So what should we be doing about this?

We know that people stay put when they respect and feel valued by the organization they work for. They still want promotions, developmental coaching, rewards and recognition. *How are you helping your team feel connected?*

They stay with managers they feel respect and value them. They need the same coaching, development (occasional hand-holding) and support they got when they worked in the office. *How are you doing there?*

They tend to hang in there when they like the people they work for and work with, and have fun and feel like they are really contributing to a real team, not just a group of individuals.

Remote teams can be strong, productive, and stay together a good long time, if we're aware of why people get restless.

www.remoteleadershipinstitute.com/communication/why-do-remote-workers-leave-more-often/



12 WAYS TO CONFRONT DOUBT WITH CERTAINTY

Ignorance never doubts. Times are always uncertain.

Uneasy leaders understand:

1. Decisions impact others.
2. Circumstances change.
3. Failure is possible.

Boldness without doubt is tragedy waiting to happen.



When stakes are high, explore your doubts. Courageous leaders ask, “What if I’m wrong?”

Burying doubt, when you feel uncertain, closes minds.

12 ways to confront doubt with certainty:

1. Go with your highest points of confidence, even if they’re low. Accept that confidence is never high in turbulent times.
2. Focus on behaviors more than results. You can’t predict results. You can control behaviors.
3. Make short-term decisions. If you have reasonable certainty that you’re aren’t doing harm, keep going.
4. Run a pilot program.

5. Seek advice from someone who has already done it.
6. Answer what-ifs, don’t just explore them. “This is what we’ll do if...”
7. Express doubts and concerns in private with your inner circle.
8. Explain how you’re preparing in public.
9. Adopt a ‘learn and grow’ approach.
10. Be decisive – stay open.
 - We’re taking action based on what we know.
 - If things change, we’ll reconsider.
 - When we know more, we’ll adjust.
11. Admit mistakes and press forward. Pretending you were right when you were wrong makes you look like a fool.
12. Make a list of everything that could go wrong. Write the likelihood that your concerns will happen. Expend energy on the big rocks.
 - Income will fall below expectation – 20%.
 - Personnel issues will get worse – 60%
 - You could lose your job – 5%

Things don’t go from uncertain to certain. They go from uncertain to less uncertain.

Reprinted from LeadershipFreak blog:
<https://leadershipfreak.blog/2016/12/08/12-ways-to-confront-doubt-with-certainty/>

Ask candidates with disabilities these key questions

Know what you can ask a disabled applicant without putting you on a collision course with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Including people with disabilities in your hiring efforts is a good idea, but you should know what you can ask a disabled applicant without putting you on a collision course with the Americans with Disabilities Act. These are some safe sample questions—provided they're asked under the right conditions:

- **“Do you need any special equipment or setting for the interview?”** This is the kind of question you should ask everyone. It indicates your willingness to accommodate individual needs, regardless of their cause. You might explain what the interview and hiring process will involve, such as a written test or demonstration of skills.

- **“Do you use any particular technology at work that helps you do your job?”** You're on safe ground under one of three conditions: 1) The candidate tells you up front about a disability that isn't obvious; 2) The candidate lets you know that he or she will need reasonable accommodation to do the work; or 3) Your own observations of an obvious disability lead you to reasonably believe an accommodation may be necessary. Just don't probe into the underlying cause of the disability. Stick to workplace issues.

- **“What accommodations have you needed in previous jobs?”** This question is generally permissible under the conditions listed above. Just be careful not to ask the

question in such a way that you seem to be looking for information about an undisclosed or unapparent disability.

- **“Tell me an example of how you've used technology to perform your job duties.”** Again, this query is safe in the three situations described above, as long as you're not trying to elicit information about a disability. Emphasize that you're only interested in job duties, not personal activities.

- **“Do you foresee any difficulties with transportation or scheduling?”** A better way to explore this issue is to discuss your attendance standards and ask whether the candidate can meet them—and to ask this of every candidate, regardless of disability issues.

—Adapted from the Workforce Online website

Reprinted from:

https://www.managebetter.biz/Main/Articles/30934.aspx?utm_source=salesforce&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Ragan+Manage+Better+Insider+-+Final+-+July+19

While this article contains useful information and guidance; always check with your HR office regarding interview questions to ensure you are abiding by your Agency policies.

Federal Times Retirement Article (December 2016)

Under the Trump administration, change is inevitable. Some agencies will prosper while others may find themselves diminished or eliminated. The same goes for their employees.

If you suspect your agency will take a hit and you have the right combination of age and service, this may be a good time to retire. The end of 2016 leave year would be the best time to do it. That's especially true if you carried the maximum amount of annual leave into the current year and haven't used much of the time you've accumulated since then. Here's why.

When you retire, all of those hours of unused annual leave will be paid to you in a lump sum, which will be calculated as if you had remained on the job until that leave ran out. Assuming there's a pay increase in January, all the hours that fall after its effective date of Jan 8, 2017, will be paid to you at the higher hourly rate.

Another incentive to retire at the end of the year is that you'll be paying less in taxes than before you retired. Here's why. First, your income will not only be reduced but you may also fall into a lower tax bracket. Second, a portion of your annuity will be tax free because it's a return of the money you contributed to the retirement fund while you were working, money on which you've already paid taxes.

If you decide to retire, it's important to pick the right date because the rules are different for CSRS and FERS. If you are a FERS employee, you must retire no later than the last day of a month to be on the annuity roll in the following month. If you are a CSRS employee, you may retire up to the third day of a month and be on the annuity roll in the

same month. However, your annuity payment will be reduced by 1/30th for every one of those three days that you aren't on the annuity roll.

Here's what could happen if you pick the wrong date. If you are a FERS employee who retires Jan. 1 instead of Dec. 31, you won't go on the annuity roll until Feb. 1 and won't receive your first annuity payment until March 1. Similarly, if you are a CSRS employee who retires Jan 4 instead of Jan 3, you'll be faced with the same delay in receiving your first annuity payment.

Here's something else to consider: If you are a CSRS employee who is debating whether to retire Dec. 31 or wait until Jan 3, you'll have to weigh the value of three extra days at full pay versus a 1/10th reduction in your January annuity payment.

You also need to be aware that you'll only get credit for annual and sick leave earned during a pay period if you retire at the end of that pay period. You won't get any credit for those hours if you retire before that pay period ends. This rule will affect anyone who retires either on the last day of December or no later than Jan 3. That's because the last pay period in December ends Dec. 24. And the last pay period in 2016 ends on Jan. 7, 2017, too late for you to be on the annuity roll in January.

While a new administration may increase your desire to retire, make sure to consider other factors before you make up your mind to leave.

Article written by Reg Jones who was the head of retirement and insurance planning at the Office of Personnel Management, published in the Federal Times, December 2016 edition.

HOW TO RISE ABOVE SQUEAKY-WHEEL LEADERSHIP AND ENERGIZE TOP PERFORMANCE

Squeaky-wheel leaders spend too much time focused on broken stuff.

The seduction of squeaky-wheel leadership makes confused leaders feel important. But, ultimately it means:

1. Failure outshines progress.
2. Poor performers take priority over top.
3. Environments migrate toward low energy and disengagement.



Today's HR challenge is retaining and maximizing top performers while developing the middle.

Compassion versus a kick in the pants:

#1. Lean toward compassion, when top performers fall short. *Typically, they kick themselves in the pants already.* A kind word from you is gold when top performers feel disappointed in themselves.

#2. Avoid contradicting top performer's self-condemnation.

It falls on deaf ears. Agree with them instead. You're right. You did fall short.

Compassion is turning toward the future with renewed focus and energy, not shielding people from reality.

'Woe is me' never produces forward movement.

#3. Enable forward-facing reflection.

- Express confidence. If history tells me anything, you'll rise to the challenge next time.
- Focus on development. What are you learning?
- How does this disappointment enhance your capacity and expand your ability?

#4. Pull with.

The magic words of servant-leadership are, "How can I help?"

#5. Provide bodacious challenge. Don't shy away from laying down new challenges after disappointing performance.

Raise the bar, don't lower it. Top performers relish a chance to prove themselves. After all, if you learn from failure, you reach higher next time.

New challenges, after disappointing performance, let top performers know you still believe in them.

<https://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/2016/11/28/how-to-rise-above-squeaky-wheel-leadership-and-energize-top-performance/>

THE 5 MOST PAINFUL LEADERS TO BE AROUND

Some leaders are painful to be around. To be honest, sometimes you and I are the pain.

We've all been the leader others complain about.



The 5 most painful leaders to be around:

1. Nit-pickers. You're a bad case of heartburn when you belittle the 80% that's good with the 20% that's bad. (Enjoy the 80%. Improve the 20%.)
2. Ball-droppers. You're a toothache when you don't follow-through and follow-up.
3. Drama-makers. You're an empty glass in the desert when everything's a crisis.
4. Down-in-the-mouthers. You're a stone in a shoe when you always need a pick-me-up from your team.
5. Hand-wringers. You're an energy suck when all you see is what could go wrong.

Don't expect success if you're a constant pain.

5 surprising ways to advance your success with others:

#1. Care deeply about relationships. (It's not just results.)

The most important relationships are with people who depend on you.

If you care about your future, care about relationships with coworkers, supervisors, and direct reports. The people closest to you are most relevant to job satisfaction, opportunity, and advancement.

#2. Invite and act on feedback.

1. I'm working on connecting with the team. (Context enhances feedback.)
2. What do you see me doing that strengthens connections?
3. What do you see me doing that weakens connection?
4. What suggestions do you have? (Seeking input elevates the status of giver and receiver.)
5. Would you tell me when I do something that works? Doesn't work?

#3. Advance the agenda of others, without sacrificing your own.

1. What challenges are you facing?
2. What's important about this?
3. What crossroads are you facing?
4. How can I help?

Those who add value are always welcomed.

#4. Understand the difference between advising and advocating.

Advisers aren't attached to advice. Freedom goes down as advocating goes up.

#5. Say what others fear saying.

1. Point out inconsistencies.
2. Describe negative patterns.
3. Challenge and confront in private.

<https://leadershipfreak.wordpress.com/2016/11/29/the-5-most-painful-leaders-to-be-around/>



Houston FEB is proud to host the following training:

Secrets for Dealing with Difficult People

April 4, 2017



(1-day Course)

Most people do exactly the **WRONG** things in most situations when dealing with “difficult” people. In this seminar, you will understand the forces that compel people to be difficult—and learn the **RIGHT** things to do about it.

TOPICS COVERED DURING THE DAY:

- ❖ Primary reasons conflicts occur—and how to see them coming
- ❖ How to break the cycles that lead to hostilities.
- ❖ How to stop a conflict from escalating.
- ❖ How to address conflict in a way that minimizes defensiveness and hostility.
- ❖ Giving and receiving criticism.
- ❖ Conflict resolution strategies
- ❖ Define and recognize the value of diversity
- ❖ Learn how to define common ground from which to develop solutions
- ❖ How to talk to someone when you are angry, hurt, frustrated or insulted
- ❖ How to decrease resistance and increase cooperation
- ❖ What you can do to reduce conflict and promote better understanding.

HOW YOU WILL BENEFIT:

- ❖ How to talk to someone when you are angry, hurt, frustrated or insulted.
- ❖ Learn how to define common ground from which to develop solutions
- ❖ Define and recognize the value of diversity.



**Houston FEB
Leadership Development Training
Registration and Enrollment information**



Date:	Tuesday, April 4, 2017
Time:	Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. Training will be: 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Location:	1919 Smith Street, 1 st Floor Conference Room, Houston, TX
Cost:	\$162.50 per participant
Who should Attend:	This training is valuable to Supervisors, Leaders, and just about anyone in the workplace

Name of Participant: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Agency/Registrant may pay by:

☐ check ☐ credit card ☐ government voucher

Contact for Payment: _____ Phone: _____

Please mail to:	Federal Executive Board 2320 La Branch Street, Rm 1107 Houston, TX 77004-1032
Or Email to:	Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov
Call to provide payment info:	FEB Office voice line: 713-425-2440

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, refunds and cancellations will be permitted through March 28, 2017. However, after that date, registrations must be honored by the individual or agency involved. If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged!

Public Service Recognition Awards

2017 Nomination Package



Eligibility:

All civilian and military federal employees of U.S. government departments, agencies and offices in the Houston Regional area are eligible for nomination.

Nomination Process:

1. Prepare Nomination Package(s) (described below)
2. Submit each nomination individually to Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov by **COB March 1, 2017**. A confirmation email will be sent acknowledging your submission.
3. Nominations may be submitted by any person familiar with the nominee; however, the nomination must be approved and signed by the nominee's agency head or local senior official.
4. Employees may be nominated for more than one award category, but separate nomination packages must be submitted.
5. Prior year winners may not be nominated again in the same category.

Nomination Package:

1. Completed Nomination Form (included in this package)
2. Nomination Narrative. Following the outline below, supply a clear explanation (please restrict to 2 pages or less) of why your nominee should be chosen. Please limit to 2 pages.
 - a) Accomplishments: Describe specific accomplishments that relate to the award category. Include the manner and extent to which it exceeds normal job expectations. Be sure to include all pertinent dates and durations of activities.
 - b) Impact: Describe the impact that the nominee's activities have had on the organization, staff, other organizations, and/or customers served.
3. Digital photograph of nominee(s).

Awards Ceremony:

Awards will be formally presented at a ceremony in May on or near Public Service Recognition Week.

Award Categories & Descriptions

Administrative Excellence. This award recognizes an individual appointed to an assistant, secretary or clerical position for a significant contribution to the success of an organization's mission. The nominee must have demonstrated exemplary performance, superior quality and a commitment to excellence.

Community Service. Award will be presented to an individual who has enhanced the image of federal employees and given conspicuous service to the community or general public through non-job related activities. Nominees should devote significant personal time and effort to community activities, welfare organizations, or other non-profit non-partisan groups on an ongoing basis.

NOTE: If the nomination is based on an act of heroism, the nominee will have performed a valuable service to the community or to an individual that could have placed the employee in a hazardous or perilous situation.

Customer Service. This award recognizes an individual or group for a significant contribution to Public Service by their strong commitment to improving customer service, customer satisfaction and improved customer relations. Outcomes could be improved product or service delivery, reduced red-tape, or exceeding customer services goals / expectations.

Employee with Disability. This award recognizes an individual with physical disabilities that has overcome challenges presented by a disability and performs their job in an exceptional manner.

Interagency Collaboration. This award recognizes an individual or group for significant contribution to Public Service with activities that required coordination and collaboration with 2 or more governmental units across agency jurisdictional lines to achieve a common goal(s).

Leadership Excellence. This award recognizes any person that directs the work of others (director, manager, supervisor, team lead) for a significant contribution to Public Service through leadership in meeting the mission and goals of their organization. The nominee must demonstrate the talent and competencies essential to the leadership culture of Federal Government.

Legal / Law Enforcement. This award recognizes an individual or group for a significant contribution to Public Service in activities related to justice, law enforcement and the law. Activities may include the performance of law enforcement, security, investigative work, criminal justice, counterterrorism, intelligence, or other legal or law enforcement activity.

Team Excellence. This award recognizes a team or group for a significant contribution to Public Service in activities that overcome challenges to make a significant contribution to the employing organization, using the shared skills and experience of team members. The team should demonstrate innovation, creative problem solving, collaboration, and a dedication to the goals and objectives of the organization.

Trades / Crafts. This award recognizes an individual or team involved in the recognized trade, craft, skilled or unskilled manual and technical occupations or laboring occupations.



Public Service Awards Nomination Form

Due by March 1, 2017

Award Category:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Excellence | <input type="checkbox"/> Employee with Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal / Law Enforcement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Interagency Collaboration | <input type="checkbox"/> Team Excellence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Excellence | <input type="checkbox"/> Trades Crafts |

Nominee Information:

Name (or Team Name*):	
Job Title:*	
Email Address:*	
Telephone:	
Organization:	
Mailing Address:	

** If team, please supply team member names, titles and emails on a separate sheet*

Nominator Information:

Name:	
Title:	
Email:	
Phone:	

Signature:

Name of Agency Head or Local Senior Official:	
Signature of Agency Head or Local Senior Official:	

Nominations must be submitted to Gerald.Poole@gsa.gov no later than March 1, 2017.